**Syllabus for Cambodia: History, Art and Culture**

**HUM 125 30**

This is a 6 credit learning community with The Art of the Comic: Focus on Cambodia constituting 3 credits and Cambodia: History, Art and Culture constituting 3 credits.

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**Course Description**: This course explores the historical, political, and cultural events that shape Cambodian art and culture. Topics will range from the 600-year-old Angkor civilization, Buddhism, and French colonialism, to the American secret bombing during the Vietnam war, the Khmer Rouge genocide, the UNTAC period, and the current revival of traditional music, dance and art. The course will also examine cultural and social effects on individuals and families, in Cambodia and in the Cambodian-American community, of 40 years of civil war. Students will learn how to conduct research and interviews with artists, and religious and community leaders, and document their findings, including creating a short visual narrative in the linked course, The Art of the Comic Book: Focus on Cambodia.   
  
**Prerequisite(s):** Eligibility for English 101

**Learning objectives:** As a result of successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe major historical periods and events in Cambodian history, including the Angkor civilization, the French colonial period, the war years between 1950 and 1980, including the events that occurred 1975-1979 under Democratic Kampuchea, the UNTAC period, and the contemporary period.
2. Identify and describe the main ideas and features of Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism and Animism.
3. Compare and contrast art and architectural styles from the Angkor period to the present.
4. Describe and explain traditional Khmer music styles and the ways that modern, western style music has been incorporated into the Khmer style.
5. Describe and explain the role of Khmer dance in Khmer culture in the past and present.
6. Compare and contrast depictions of the Ream Ker in Angkor carvings, mural painting S’bek Thom—large shadow puppet theater, and classical Khmer dance.
7. Compare and contrast the effect of the Cambodian political situation from 1960 to the present on Khmer peoples in Cambodia and in the diaspora community in the USA.
8. Describe and explain major issues that Khmer youth in Cambodia and in the USA face as they grow into adulthood.
9. Compare and contrast the role of dance, music, religion and art in Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries.
10. Develop an interview guide and conduct interviews with informants including local monks, artists, and community leaders.
11. Analyze the interviews and integrate material from the interviews into a series of short papers and a final paper.
12. Articulate an informed position in discussions of Cambodian and Southeast Asian history, art and culture.

**Textbook:** Your required text, a compendium of readings and video clips, will be available at the MCC bookstore and through CoursePackets.net: <http://www.coursepackets.net/index.html>

**Attendance Policy:** You are expected to attend all classes for the full class period. One absence is allowable without penalty. Two absences may result in a 5-point deduction from your final grade. You will not pass if you have three or more absences unless you make up the class time by special arrangement with the instructors.

**Classroom Etiquette:** The college classroom is the place where we can grow our minds. We learn new information, but more importantly we learn to think in new ways using our new knowledge. We relate new ideas to what we already know and practice integrating old and new and sometimes contradictory or conflicting ideas. We learn to make informed judgments and practice the art of engaged and informed discussion —an important activity called critical thinking. This is interesting and sometimes difficult and challenging work. It requires the full and dedicated attention of each member of our class—we are, for a semester, an academic community.

Unlike other activities where the primary goal may be entertainment or self-fulfillment, the college class requires placing the care and welfare of the entire community first. Therefore a set of policies for the good of the entire class—the academic community—will be enforced during our semester together.

Please **Turn Off** your cell phone before entering the classroom.

You may **NOT** answer your phone, text, or browse the Internet during class.

You may **NOT** wear headphones or ear buds during class.

You may **NOT** use any computer to check your Facebook page, your email, or your Flickr site, or use any other form of social media during class unless it is for the benefit of the entire class and as part of a class discussion or to demonstrate an important point.

You may **NOT** game, shop, do homework for another class, or carry out any other computer activities unless expressly asked to during class.

College students are expected to look at the professor and other students when each is talking, to take notes on class lectures and discussions, and to engage in classroom activities during class time. Personal activities should be conducted during your personal time, not during class time. Engaging in personal activities during class time is extremely rude and disrespectful and will result in your being asked to leave the classroom for the day.

**Course requirements and Grading:**

**Class participation 20%**

Group discussion will be an important component of this course and we want you to contribute your thoughts and share your learning. It is important that you complete assigned readings and view assigned films and videos before each class so that you can fully contribute to discussions. You will write short, informal reflection papers in class, at the end of discussions. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the research materials and your ability to analyze and synthesize the material. Your reflections papers will be marked pass if you demonstrate effort and increasing understanding and fail if you are absent or demonstrate lack of understanding or little or no effort. This will document your attendance and class participation. You cannot make-up these reflection papers.

**Interviews 20%**

We will also conduct interviews during class with Buddhist monks, Cambodian artists, dancers, and musicians, a former Khmer Rouge boy soldier and community members. You will have an opportunity to help design these interviews by creating interview questions, and to help conduct the interviews by recording them, transcribing recordings and posting transcripts to our course website. Your participation in the interview process will be marked pass if you contribute questions, record interviews, and transcribe and post transcripts. Absence or lack of participation will be marked fail. You cannot make-up interviews.

**Homework assignments 20%**

Each week you will watch videos and complete guided viewing exercises, and read articles or sections of books and answer guided reading exercises. Bring your answers to the guided exercises to the next class or turn them in as requested by your instructors. The guided viewing and guided reading questions will be graded on a point scale according to a rubric which we will hand out in class. This will document required research. We will encourage you to complete additional research such as reading books and articles from the course bibliography, watching additional videos, and conducting additional interviews and will award extra credit to any student who has completed the required research and documents additional research.

**Exams 20%**

There will be two exams of your knowledge over the course of the semester. The dates of exams will be announced in class two weeks prior to each exam. We will issue a study guide for each exam two weeks prior to the exam date.

**Final paper 20%**

You will complete a 6 to 10 page research paper that answers one of our guiding questions through analysis and synthesis of your research throughout the semester. We will hand out more detailed requirements and a grading rubric in class at least four weeks before the due date.

Please note that assignments and the final project must be handed in on the due date to receive full credit. We will deduct 5 points per day late from the grade of any late assignments. We will pass out rubrics for each assignment and for the final paper and will use these rubrics to grade your work. Project Due Dates will be announced at least two weeks ahead of time. Exams will be announced at least two weeks ahead of time. The final project due date will be the last day of the exam period.

**Course organization**

This course will be organized around a series of guiding questions. We will attempt to answer these questions, initially by discussing what we might already know. Your instructors will offer lectures on each topic. You will also conduct research, including watching videos, investigating websites, reading articles and portions of books by a variety of authorities, and interviewing experts from the Cambodian community. We will discuss this research as a group and you will then formulate a revised answer to our guiding questions, informed by our research. This will become the subject of a short reflection paper on each topic, and will also be developed as a comic in our linked course, The Art of the Comic: Focus on Cambodia.

Two exams and a final paper will document your knowledge, and ability to analyze and synthesize the research through the course of the semester.

**List of questions**

1. Why would teenagers from a slum in one of the poorest developing countries in the world—Cambodia—study folk dancing? Why would teenagers from Lowell, MA spend their spare time studying Cambodian classical dance? What issues do these youth face that make the study of Cambodian dance important? What makes it difficult for these youth to study Cambodian dance?
2. Why is a rock opera combining classical and contemporary Cambodian music important? Why is Cambodian classical music important? Why combine traditional and new music? What issues had to be solved to create and produce this opera?
3. What issues are presented in the rock opera, *Where Elephants Weep*? Why is there a Cambodian Diaspora? Why do the characters Sam and Dara return to Cambodia to become Buddhist monks? What is Buddhism and what is the function of a monk?
4. What is the Angkor period? Why is the Angkorperiod important? What happened during this time? What are the effects of Angkor on contemporary Cambodia? What are the traditional roles of art, architecture, artists and architects in Cambodia? How do contemporary artists and architects operate and how do they see their roles?
5. What is the influence of the French colonial period on present day Cambodia? Why was Cambodia a French colony? How did Cambodia become independent?
6. What happened in Cambodia during the period 1950’s -1980’s, especially 1975-1979? Why is this so important? How is this period portrayed outside Cambodia? How is it understood and portrayed inside Cambodia?
7. What is going on in present day Cambodia? What are some of the main headlines in the news? What is going on in the diaspora community today? What ideas and issues are being discussed?

**Week One Cambodian Dance and Youth Issues**

**Introductory Lecture: Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class watch The Mekong Merrimac Connection: Cambodian Dance in Phnom Penh and Lowell, MA.

For Homework watch the video Dancing Through Death: The Monkey, Magic and Madness of Cambodia and answer guided viewing questions, both available in your course text.

Read the chapter, “Children,” from the book Cambodia Now, and answer the guided reading questions, all available in your course text.

**Week Two Cambodian Dance and Youth Issues**

**Dance Lecture: The Role of Dance in Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class prepare for an interview with performers and master teachers from Angkor Dance Troupe.

For Homework watch the CCPCanada program on Cambodian classical dance: 1/9 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMM03J8kSjI&feature=related> and answer the guided viewing questions, available in your course text.

Read pgs. 37 through 91 in Earth In Flower, and the Introduction from Khmer Folk Dance, and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Three Cambodian Dance and Youth Issues**

**Interview**

In class conduct an interview with performers and master teachers from Angkor Dance Troupe.

For Homework, review your interview notes and recordings. Prepare and post a transcript of the interview. Prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Four**  **Cambodian Music: Where Elephants Weep**

**Music Lecture: The Role of Music in Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class watch the Cambodian rock opera, Where Elephants Weep and review the libretto.

In class prepare for an interview with Mr. John Burt, Executive Producer of Where Elephants Weep and master musicians.

For Homework, watch the short documentary by Scott Stafford on Where Elephants Weep: <http://vimeo.com/11484924> and answer the guided viewing questions, available in your course text.

Read pgs. 191 through 238 in Cultures of Independence and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Five**  **Cambodian Music: Where Elephants Weep**

In class conduct an interview with Mr. John Burt, Executive Producer of Where Elephants Weep, and master musicians who performed in the Lowell premier.

For Homework, review your interview notes and recordings. Prepare and post a transcript of the interview. Prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Six**  **Theravada Buddhism**

**Religion Lecture: Buddhism and other Religions in Southeast Asia**

In class prepare for an interview with the monks of Trairatanaram Temple.

For Homework, read pgs. 129 through 168 in Buddhism in World Cultures, and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Seven Theravada Buddhism**

Class trip to interview the monks of Trairatanaram Temple.

For Homework, review your interview notes and recordings. Prepare and post a transcript of the interview. Prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Eight Exam #1**

**Week Nine Angkor and Cambodian Art**

**Art Lecture: The Role of Art in Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class, watch the UNESCO video Angkor Wat: Vishnu’s Heavenly Palace at <http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/index.php?s=films_details&id_page=33&id_film=106>

For Homework, read pgs. 57 through 194 in Angkor and the Khmer Civilization, and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Ten Cambodian Art**

In class, watch the video Cambodian Art: Revival and Renewal.

Prepare for an interview with artist Yary Livan.

For Homework, watch the video Contemporary Cambodian Art and answer the guided viewing questions, available in your course text.

Read pgs. 239 through 316 in Cultures of Independence and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Eleven Cambodian Art**

In class, interview artist Yary Livan.

For Homework, review your interview notes and recordings. Prepare and post a transcript of the interview. Prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Twelve The French Colonial Period**

**History Lecture: Colonialism in Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class watch the movie The Sea Wall.

For Homework, read pgs. 117 through 122 and 361 through 370 in The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

For Homework, prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Thirteen Independence and Genocide**

**History Lecture: The Contemporary Period in Cambodia and Southeast Asia**

In class, watch the video The Killing Fields.

For Homework, read A History of Democratic Kampuchea and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

**Week Fourteen Independence and Genocide**

In class, prepare to interview former boy soldier and community leader Sayon Souen.

In class, watch the video Lost Loves .

For Homework, read A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge’s S-21, and answer the guided reading questions, available in your course text.

For Homework watch the video New Year Baby and answer the guided viewing questions, available in your course text.

**Week Fifteen Contemporary Cambodia and the Diaspora**

In class, interview Sayon Souen.

For Homework, review your interview notes and recordings. Prepare and post a transcript of the interview. Prepare for final discussion and your reflection paper.

**Week Sixteen Exam#2**

**Final paper is due.**

**Bibliography**

Berkwitz, Stephen C., Ed. *Buddhism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc. 2006. Print.

Chandler, David. *A History of Cambodia*. 4th ed. Boulder: Westview Press. 2007. Print.

Chander, D and Mabbet, I. *The Khmers*. Queensland: Wiley-Blackwell. 1995. Print.

Chhim, Chanbora. *A Collection of Khmer Folktales*. Phnom Penh. 2010. Print.

Coates, Karen J. *Cambodia Now: Life in the Wake of War*. North Carolina: MacFarland and Co. 2005. Print.

Coe, Michael D. *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization*. New York: Thames and Hudson. 2003. Print.

Cravath, Paul. *Earth in Flower: The Divine Mystery of the Cambodian Dance Drama*. Holmes Beach: DatAsia, Inc. 2007. Print.

Danguan, Zhou. *A Record of Cambodia: The Land and It’s People.* Thailand: Silkworm Books. 2007. Print.

Daravuth, Ly and Muan, Ingrid. *Cultures of Independence: An Introduction to Cambodian Arts and Culture in the 1950’s and 1960’s*. Phnom Penh: Reyum Publishing. 2001. Print.

Dayley, Robert and Neher, Clark D. *Southeast Asia in the International Era*. Boulder: Westview Press. 2010. Print.

Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*. Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia. 2007

Heywood, Denise. *Cambodian Dance: Celebration of the Gods*. Bangkok: River Books Co. 2008. Print.

Hingham, Charles. *The Civilization of Angkor*. Berkeley: University of California

Press. 2001. Print.

Jessup, Helen I. and Zephir, Thierry, Ed. *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory.* New York: Thames and Hudson. 1997. Print.

Kam, Garrett. *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia.* Singapore: Select Books Pte Ltd. 2000. Print.

Nath, Vann. *A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge’s S-21.* Bangkok: White Lotus. 1998. Print.

Owen, Norman G., Ed. *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia.* Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. 2005. Print.

Sam, Sam-Ang. *Khmer Folk Dance*. Newington: Khmer Studies Institute. 1987. Print.

Settya, Em. *Flower of Battambang*. Phnom Penh: Our Books. 2010. Print.

Tully, John. *A Short History of Cambodia: From Empire to Survival*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin. 2005. Print.

## Vitarin, Chan. [Kbach: A Study of Khmer Ornament](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1588860760/?tag=devorg-20). Phnom Penh: Reyum Institute of Arts and Culture; 1ST edition. 2005. Print.

**Cambodian films (Khmer directors/productions)**

The Burnt Theater. Dir. Rithy Panh. Writ. Rithy Panh. Perf. Peng Phan. 2005. Post Democratic Kampuchea, performing artists attempt to revive Cambodian arts in Phnom Penh.

Enemies of the People. Dir. Theth Sambath and Rob Lemkin. Writ. Rob Lemkin. Perf. Theth Sambath. Prod. Old Street Films, 2010. Reporter Theth Sambath interviews former Khmer Rouge leader over a period of several years.

The Land of the Wandering Souls. Dir. Rithy Panh. Writ. Rithy Panh. Perf. Peng Pha Prod. [Cati Couteau](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0184172/). 2002.  This documentary illustrates the hardships, dignity, and wit of workers who laid Cambodia’s first fiber optics cable, while providing insight into the social and economic contradictions facing contemporary Cambodia.

Lost Loves. Dir. Chhay Bora. Writ. Chhay Bora. Perf. Kauv Sotheary. Prod. Chhay Bora. 2010. The story of director Bora’s mother-in-law and her family during the Democratic Kampuchea period. This is a film of the Khmer Rouge genocide from a Cambodian director using Cambodian actors and telling a Cambodian story (The Killing Fields is a Hollywood film.)

### Neak Sre/The Rice People. Dir. Rithy Panh. Writ. Rithy Panh. Perf. Peng Phan Prod. [Jacques Bidou](http://mubi.com/cast_members/13614) and [Pierre-Alain Meier](http://mubi.com/cast_members/23140) . 1994. The story, based upon the novel Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan by eminent Malay author Shahnon Ahmad, is transposed to a rural Cambodian setting.

### S21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine. Dir. Rithy Panh. Writ. Rithy Panh. Perf. [Khieu 'Poev' Ches](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1747425/). Prod. [Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA)](http://www.imdb.com/company/co0017676/). 2004. Former Khmer Rouge guards recreate their experiences at Toul Sleng interrogation center and engage in discussions with victim and survivor Vann Nath.

### The Sea Wall. Dir. Rithy Panh. Writ. Marguerite Duras. Perf. [Isabelle](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1747425/) Huppert. Prod. [Catherine Dussart Productions (CDP)](http://www.imdb.com/company/co0139641/). 2008. A period piece set in Cambodia in 1931 during the French colonial period. A widow fights the colonial bureaucracy to keep her rice farm viable.

Site 2. Dir. Rithy Panh. Perf. Peng Phan. Prod. 1994. Life in a refugee camp on the Thai border following the Khmer Rouge genocide.

**About Cambodia**

Duch on Trial. Dir. Milan Lov and Matthew Robinson. Prod. Khmer Mekong Films/East West Center/British Embassy. 2010. Twenty-two thirty minute programs that cover the entire trial, verdict and sentencing by an international tribunal of [Kaing Guek Eav](http://forum.eastwestcenter.org/Khmer-Rouge-Trials/tag/kaing-guek-eav/), more commonly known as “Comrade Duch,” the head of the Khmer Rouge prison and interrogation center known as S21.

Holy Lola. Dir. Bertrand Tavernier. Perf. Jacques Gamblin. Prod. Little Bear. 2004. "Holy Lola" examines the culture of Cambodia and the great need of an entire country whose only real export is the orphaned children created from the wars with the Khmer Rouge.

The Killing Fields. Dir. Roland Joffe. Writ. Bruce Robinson. Perf. Haing S. Ngor. Prod. Enigma LTD and Goldcrest Films Int., 1984. The experiences of an American and a Khmer journalist during the fall of the Lon Nol regime, the Democratic Kampuchea period and the overthrow of that regime.

The Tenth Dancer. Dir. Sally Ingleton. Writ. Sally Ingleton. Perf. Em Theay. Prod. Singing Nomads Productions. 1993. After Pol Pot was overthrown, Em Theay now the Head teacher of the National Dance Company, returned to Phnom Penh to help rebuild the troupe. There she met up with her former student Sok Chea, whom she then trained to become one of the principal dancers in the company.

Threads of Life.  <http://www.der.org/films/ksai-chivit-threads-of-life.html>  
 Documents the art of Khmer silk weaving and its place in Cambodian society today.

**Khmer diaspora**

Boy Soldier: Sayon’s Story. Dir. Janet Gardner. Perf. Sayon Soeun. Prod. Gardner Documentary Group. A documentary about a former boy soldier for the Khmer Rouge, who is now a well-regarded leader and spokesperson in the Cambodian American community. Currently in production with a projected release of 2012.

Dancing Through Death: The Monkey, Magic and Madness of Cambodia. Dir. Janet Gardner. Perf. Thavro Phim. Prod. Gardner Documentary Group. 1999.

Monkey Dance. Dir. [Julie Mallozzi](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0540178/). Writ. [Julie Mallozzi](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0540178/), [Rebecca Sherman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0792550/). Perf. [Samnang Hor](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm4440510/). Prod. [Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)](http://www.imdb.com/company/co0200316/) and [Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)](http://www.imdb.com/company/co0024370/). 2004. A documentary about Khmer American teens who are caught between two worlds—their parents traditional Cambodian culture and modern American teen culture.

#### New Year Baby. Dir. [Socheata Poeuv](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2439615/). Writ. [Socheata Poeuv](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2439615/) and [Charles Vogl](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2440646/). Perf. Socheata Poeuv. Prod. Broken English Productions. 2004. The true story of a Khmer American woman, who visits Cambodia for the first time with her parents and learns the startling secret of their meeting and marriage.

**Cambodian Film Resources**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rithy_PanhIn>

<http://www.bophana.org/site/index.php?lang=en>